

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Housing projects should be part of bigger plan

Despite the recent spate of development in parts of West Las Vegas and depressed areas of North Las Vegas, we shouldn't be jumping for joy.

In West Las Vegas, the nonprofit Westside New Pioneers Community Development Corp. plans houses for a blighted area.

The houses will be on Van Buren Avenue between E and G streets and are the first phase of the two-part improvement project. Nine additional homes constitute the second phase of the project.

The homes — 1,600-square-foot with three bedrooms, two baths and double-car garages — will be priced between \$98,000 and \$105,000.

Also recently, The North Las Vegas City Council approved plans to issue \$4 million in bonds to help relocate Windsor Park residents from their sinking neighborhood.

Problems arose in 1988, when residents found cracks in the foundations or walls of their houses. The 241-home subdivision was built above several major geologic faults which caused problems when they shifted.

Both projects are likely to revitalize the areas they're slated for. But West Las Vegas and North Las Vegas should be wary of the olive branch-approach to appeasement.

By no means are these developments cure-alls for the ills that plague the surrounding areas — unkempt properties, drugs, violence and crime.

Instead, these developments should be the first in a continuous community revitalization effort spearheaded by elected officials governing these areas. Tied to the developments should be plans to create connected communities, rather than building piecemeal and quickly destroying the integrity of the new projects. Efforts could also be made to recruit qualified residents within these communities to help with building the development.

In addition, city officials should push for more incentives such as lower taxes for commercial developers who locate in economically depressed parts of West Las Vegas and North Las Vegas.

Lastly, residents need to demand better treatment. That starts, like it or not, with voting. If the official who represents your area isn't attentive to your needs, chew his or her ear. Demand that they visit your neighborhood consistently, not just during election time or when they pal around at a "news event" to announce a "major community project."

Attend county and commission meetings and speak during the public comment period. Circulate petitions. Craft solutions. Agitate.

The new housing developments are a promising start, but they're not nearly enough.



Elections prove God ain't Republican after all

By Joseph Lowery
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The mid-term elections whispered in, but roared out, leaving in its wake clear and sharp messages to three major forces.

The first is the religious right extremists, who have been holding the Republicans in halo hostage. The elections' proclamation was "God ain't a Republican, after all!"

The biblical God of our faith is identified on the side of justice, inclusiveness and the oppressed. He cannot be co-opted by zealots who are more of "piosity" than piety and more moralistic than moral. The message continues to be that God is defined by love not hate, compassion not cruelty and mercy not mean-spiritedness. God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and omni-non-partisan.

The voters delivered that message by rejecting candidates that represent the mean-spirited, excluding, self-righteousness of the political-religious extremists such as Fob James of Alabama, Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina and David Beasley of South Carolina.

The voters said "Amen" to Republican moderates such as George Pataki in New York and Jeb and George Bush of Florida and Texas, respectively.

The Christian extremists dumped millions into certain contests and deluged White churches with "voter guides."

They exhorted (or instructed) Republican candidates to make scandal, rather than address the issues. This holier-than-thou partisanship of the "impeachers," prompted millions of voters to send a message that while they disapprove of the president's sexual misdeeds, they nevertheless wanted to move on with an agenda that addresses affordable, accessible health care, patients' rights, terrorism, trade deficits, education and illegal drugs, among other things.

The second group that ought to hear the message is the emerging leaders of the Republican Party. Witness the exiting of Alfonse D'Amato and Faircloth and the resignation of Newt Gingrich. Those who should listen most attentively are Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania, John McCain of Arizona, the Bush brothers and others.

As they assess the future of their party, they must search deeper than the flip notion that creative recruitment is the only tactic necessary to attract African-American voters. Nonsense. It is not style but substance that will attract Black voters.

Guy Millner, who lost the race as Republican nominee for governor of Georgia, was ahead in the polls. His technique for attracting minority voters was to hire hundreds of youthful workers (and some unemployed adults) to pass out literature,

post signs in the Black community and wear Millner T-shirts.

That was a new style, but the old substance was anti-affirmative action and weak support for public schools. His opponent, who won handily, received 90 percent of the Black vote.

Substantive issues that are meaningful to African-Americans include affirmative action, education reform, accessible and affordable health care, patients' rights, decent pay, reducing disparities in sentencing, campaign finance reform and economic development.

Until Republicans hear that message and translate it into policy and programs, it is extremely doubtful that they can attract meaningful numbers of Black voters, no matter what techniques and style they use.

The third group of listeners ought to be Black Democrats who turned out in commendable numbers and

"made their day." In Georgia, more than 57 percent of White voters supported Guy Millner, the Republican nominee for governor, while 90 percent of Black voters supported Gov.-elect Roy Barnes. That 90 percent was 30 percent of the total vote cast in the gubernatorial race. Look what activism can do.

Marching is still our most effective weapon. That is marching to the voting booths, to the bank, to the library, to Black businesses.

We must now develop instruments of accountability. We have developed a Georgia Coalition for a Peoples' Agenda that is an instrument of increasing voter awareness and participation and elected official accountability. We are pleased that for the first time in the history of the state, the Democratic slate of candidates for state-wide Constitutional offices consisted of five Whites and three Blacks. Two of the three Blacks were elected: Thurbert (See Elections, Page 16)

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